



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Dawn Mayer
Child Passenger Safety Program Director
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.4536
E-mail: drmayer@nd.gov

**North Dakota Department of Health Urges Parents and Caregivers
To Have Their Child Safety Seats Inspected
*Free Car Seat Checkups Offered***

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is urging all parents and caregivers to have their child safety seats inspected to make sure they are installed and used properly, according to Dawn Mayer, Child Passenger Safety Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health.

Research by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows that three out of four child safety seats are improperly installed in vehicles, putting those children at risk of injury or even death. Free car seat checkups are offered throughout North Dakota all year long. Parents can visit www.ndhealth.gov/injury/ or call the Department of Health at 800.472.2286 to learn where and when the free checkups are scheduled.

“It’s the responsibility of all parents and caregivers to make sure their children are safely restrained – every trip, every time,” Mayer said. “We are urging everyone to get their child safety seats inspected. When it comes to the safety of a child, there is no room for mistakes.”

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for North Dakota children after the first year of life. According to the North Dakota Crash Summary 2002-2006 from the North Dakota Department of Transportation, 78 children younger than 18 died as occupants in motor vehicles and another 4,467 were injured.

In the past 30 years, the lives of 8,325 children younger than 5 have been saved nationwide by the proper use of child restraints, according to NHTSA. In 2006, child restraints saved the lives of an estimated 425 children younger than 5. Research shows that child restraints provide the best protection for all children up to age 8; after age 8, seat belts provide the best protection.

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

For maximum child passenger safety, parents and caregivers should refer to the following *4 Steps for Kids* guidelines for determining which restraint system is best suited to protect children based on age and size:

1. For the best possible protection, keep infants in the back seat in rear-facing child safety seats as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds.
2. When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds), they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats in the back seat until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).
3. Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they should ride in booster seats, using both the lap and shoulder seat belts, in the back seat until the vehicle seat belts fit properly. Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (usually at age 8 or when they are 4 feet 9 inches tall).
4. When children outgrow their booster seats (usually at age 8 or when they are 4 feet 9 inches tall), they can use the adult seat belts in the back seat if they fit properly (lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest).

National Child Passenger Safety Week will be observed Sept. 21 through 27, 2008. In North Dakota, public health agencies, law enforcement officers, Safe Kids coalitions and Safe Communities programs across the state will be reminding children and parents about the importance of using safety restraints on every trip. Representatives will be visiting schools, day cares and other locations to share their safety messages using “Buckle Up In The Back” materials developed by the North Dakota Department of Health and the North Dakota Department of Transportation. The materials contain educational activities that remind children of the importance of buckling up in the back seat when they ride in motor vehicles.

For more information on Child Passenger Safety Week, a national effort to remind parents and caregivers of the lifesaving effect child safety seats have in protecting young children, please visit www.nhtsa.gov.

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